DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 147 PS 030 647

TITLE	Healthy Start, Grow Smart: Your Five-Month-Old.
INSTITUTION	Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC.; Department of Education, Washington, DC.; Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	32p.; This publication was an initiative of Laura Bush as the First Lady of Texas and was sponsored by the Texas Department of Health. For related "Healthy Start, Grow Smart" documents, see PS 030 646 and PS 030 648-649.
AVAILABLE FROM	ED Pubs, U.S. Department of Education, P. O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free); Tel: 800-872-5327 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-470-1244; email: edpubs@inet.ed.gov. For full text: http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/earlychildhood/healthystart/.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Play; Child Health; *Child Rearing; Child Safety; Cognitive Development; *Developmental Stages; Emotional Development; *Infant Care; *Infants; Learning Activities; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Role; Physical Development
IDENTIFIERS	Brain Development

ABSTRACT

Distributed by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and Human Services, this pamphlet provides parents with information and advice about their infants in the fifth month of life. Following a brief description of developmental characteristics at this age, the pamphlet offers information on topics including infant medicines, avoiding baby bottle tooth decay, teething, playpens, sleep, brain development, and stimulating the baby with toys. The pamphlet also offers advice to parents on avoiding back strain while lifting a 5-month-old. A list of information resources for families concludes the pamphlet. (HTH)

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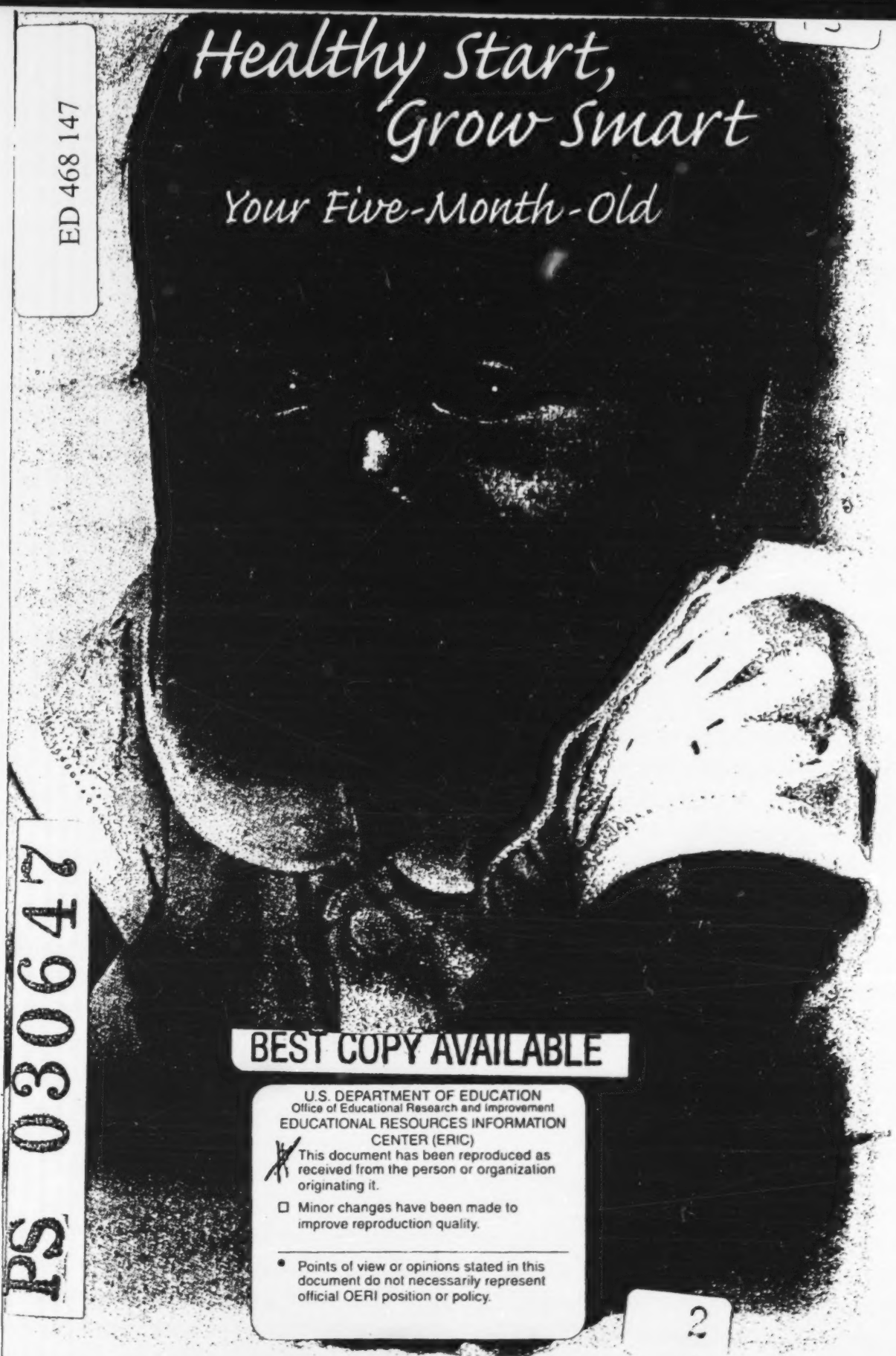
Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Five-Month-Old



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Healthy Start, Grow Smart

Your Five-Month-Old

Prepared by:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

2002

Acknowledgments

This publication was an initiative of Laura Bush as the First Lady of Texas and sponsored by the Texas Department of Health. President Bush and Mrs. Bush have asked that this series of booklets be revised and distributed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We would like to thank the Texas Department of Health for their cooperation and assistance in bringing this publication to families across the United States. In addition, we recognize the contributions that Susan H. Landry, Ph.D., Craig T. Ramey, Ph.D. and many other individuals made in the development of this magazine.

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Your Five-Month-Old

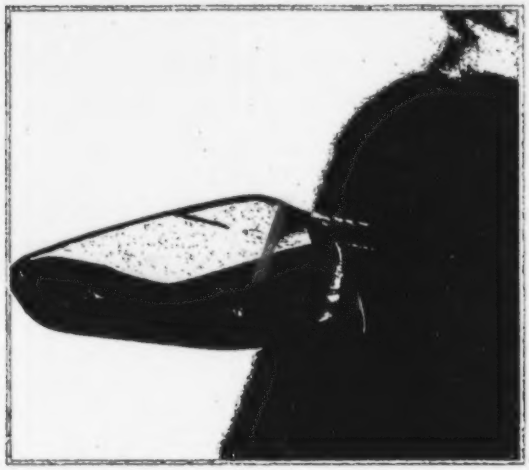
Your five-month-old is full of energy. He wakes himself up in the morning and is ready to dive into his day.

He doesn't just look at things. He wants to explore everything. He puts things in his mouth. He rocks on his stomach. He kicks his legs. He reaches for toys. He "talks" to you. These are ways he learns and grows.

Your baby is excited because he has more control over his body. He is able to reach for things he wants. He is learning to roll over. He can "read" your feelings by the tone of your voice. He likes it when you repeat his sounds.

You can have a lot of fun with your baby as you help him learn. All this exploring, growing and learning can even wear him out. Don't be surprised if he gets frustrated and fussy sometimes. He learns by trying the same movements and sounds over and over.

Questions from Parents about Medicines



My baby hasn't been feeling well. It doesn't seem to be serious. Can I give him nonprescription medicine or home remedies?

Talk to your doctor before you give your baby any medicine. Some won't help. Others may be harmful.

Some labels are hard to understand. Once the doctor has approved a nonprescription medicine, ask the pharmacist at the grocery store or drug store for help. You can ask questions at any time. You can ask for help even after you buy the medicine.

Here are some tips to follow when you give any medicine to your baby:

- ★ Never give aspirin to a baby or a child with a fever. Giving aspirin can cause a severe problem called Reye's Syndrome.

  Always give medications according to your doctor's directions.
- ★ Read the label completely and carefully.
- ★ Do exactly what the label says to do unless your doctor directs you otherwise.
- ★ Always give your baby the correct dose of medicine.
- ★ Never give medicine for a longer time than the label says.
- ★ Never give medicine more frequently than the label says.

  Always keep medicine out of the reach of children.

★ Keep medicine lids closed tightly.

★ If you are giving a prescription medicine, always give it as often and for as many days as the doctor says, even after your baby seems well.

Many infant medications come with a measuring device to make sure that you give your child EXACTLY the right dose of medication. You can also buy special measuring devices in the drug store or supermarket to ensure that you know exactly how much medication to give your baby.

When to call the doctor:

★ Your baby has a fever.

★ Your baby has diarrhea.

★ Your baby is vomiting repeatedly. If your baby vomits once and then seems healthy, he should be OK. If he vomits more than once, call your doctor. A lot of babies spit up, especially after feeding or with a burp. Spitting up usually involves bringing up only small amounts of liquid or food.

★ Your baby is pulling at his ear and screaming. Maybe he has discolored fluid coming out of his ear.

★ Your baby refuses to eat.

★ All of a sudden, your baby has trouble sleeping.

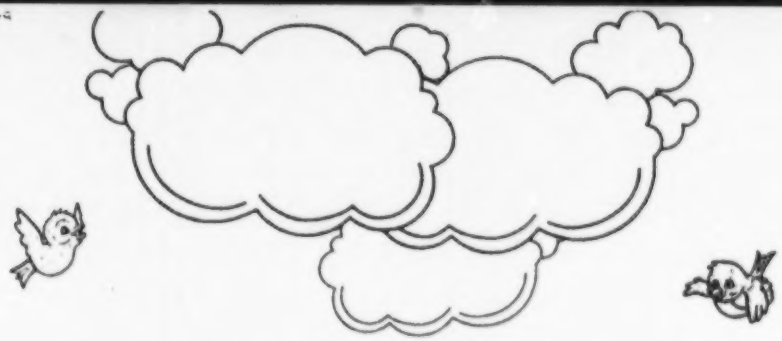
★ Your baby seems to be drowsy or less active.

It is very important that your baby not become dehydrated. Babies are small and can dehydrate quickly due to a fever, diarrhea, vomiting or refusing to drink liquids. It is especially dangerous if your small baby has two or more of these symptoms at one time.

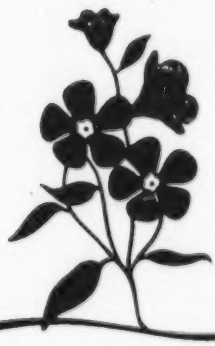
Safety Corner

As your baby grows older, he will become more active. He will move around more and explore his world. Keep him safe as he grows and learns. Here are some dangers to watch out for:

- ★ Never leave your baby alone in a bath for even a few seconds. Never leave your baby alone near any pool of water or even a bucket of water, no matter how shallow it is.
- Never leave your baby alone on a high place, like a tabletop.
- ★ Never leave your baby alone in a crib with the sides down. If he does ever fall and begins to act strangely in any way, call the doctor right away.
- ★ Never smoke around your baby. Be careful when you eat or drink hot fluids while holding your baby.



- ★ Never give food to your baby that can make him choke. Foods should be soft and runny. They should be ground up or soft, so that your baby can swallow them without chewing. Some babies become constipated when they start to eat different foods at this age. If this happens to your baby, call your doctor.
- ★ Older brothers and sisters may be jealous of the baby. They may try to hit, poke or squeeze him. They may not like it that you spend a lot of time with your baby. Talk to them about it. Let them know that you love them, too.
- ★ Watch your baby when he plays with older children. By mistake, they may give your baby something harmful to play with, or they may be too rough with your baby.
- ★ Make sure that your baby doesn't grab objects that could hurt him.
- ★ Put plugs in all open electrical outlets.
- ★ Never leave your baby alone with a pet, even if the pet appears to be child-friendly.



Avoiding Baby Bottle Tooth Decay

By now, you are enjoying your baby's smile. You can help your baby have a beautiful smile by taking care of his mouth before he gets his baby teeth. Even though his baby teeth will fall out, it is important to keep them healthy. Healthy baby teeth lead to healthy permanent teeth.

Before you can even see your baby's teeth, they need care. Clean your baby's mouth every day. Wipe it out with a soft clean cloth. This will help remove germs and keep his mouth healthy.

Protect your baby from the pain of "baby bottle tooth decay." Always hold your baby when feeding him. Never put your baby to sleep with a bottle. Formula or juice that stays in his mouth while he sleeps can harm his baby teeth. When his baby teeth appear, continue to gently wash them with a soft cloth. Do not use toothpaste until he is about three years old and able to spit it out.

When he is about one year old, you can start to brush gently your baby's teeth with a soft, baby-size toothbrush.

Your baby should get his first dental checkup when he is one year old. You may have questions about how to protect your baby's teeth. If you have questions, ask your doctor or dentist.

Is Your Baby Teething?

When will my baby get his baby teeth? Most babies will start to get their baby teeth between six and 10 months of age.

Watch for your baby's first teeth to show up in the lower front of his mouth. When this starts to happen, your baby may have some discomfort. The discomfort makes him fussy. The gums may be swollen and tender. He may want to chew things.

The two upper front teeth will probably be the next teeth to come in. The rest of his teeth will come in slowly. In time, he will have a total of 20 baby teeth.

Teething sometimes causes a temperature. If your baby has a temperature of 100 degrees or more, call your doctor or clinic. He may be sick and need treatment.

Gently rubbing your baby's gums with a clean finger, cool spoon or wet cloth can be soothing. You can also give your baby a teething ring or pacifier to chew on.

Some teething rings are made to be chilled. This cool object against his gums may feel good and make him less fussy. You don't need to put any kind of pain reliever on his gums. These wash away quickly and don't help much.

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Safety and Your Baby's High Chair

You want your baby to be safe. This means looking closely at the things you buy for your baby. One thing your baby will need is a high chair. Your baby can start to use a high chair when he is able to sit up and is ready for solid food. Here are some tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission on choosing a high chair and using it safely.

Choosing a high chair:

- ★ High chairs should have a waist strap and another strap that goes between the legs.

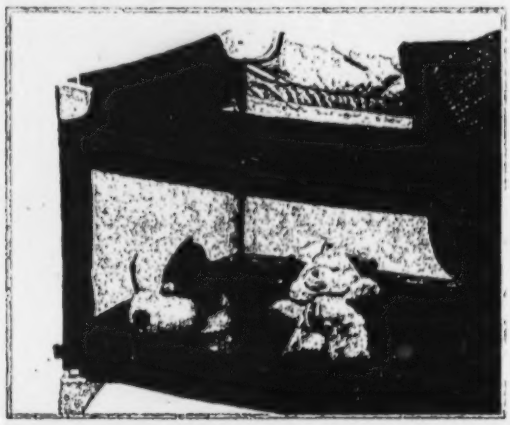
  The straps should not be attached to the tray.
- ★ The tray must lock securely.
- ★ A buckle-on waist strap should be easy to use.
- ★ High chairs should have legs spread far enough apart at the bottom so that they do not tip over easily.
- ★ Look for a locking device on folding high chairs. The lock keeps the chair from collapsing.

Using a high chair:

- ★ Always buckle your baby in. The straps keep your baby from falling or sliding under the tray, where he could be hurt.
- ★ Never leave your baby alone when he is in the high chair.
- ★ Lock the tray securely in place.
- ★ Be sure that your baby's hands are out of the way when you lock the tray.
- ★ Be sure there are no sharp edges that could cut your baby.

You may give your baby something to play with on the high chair's tray.

Tips about Your Baby's Playpen



A playpen can be a big help. You can have your baby in the same room where you are working so that he will not be alone while you do what you need to do.

You can also take the playpen outdoors with you. Make sure it is in a shady and safe spot. Stay with your baby. Outside he can watch all kinds of things that are going on, safely. You can talk to him about what he is seeing.

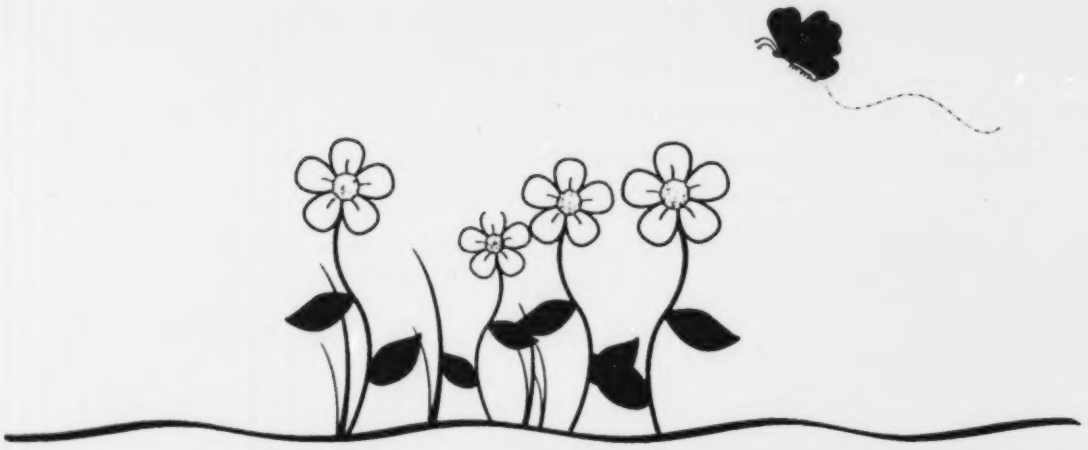
Babies should only be in playpens for very short periods of time. They need to spend time on the floor. They need time to explore while a parent watches.

If you leave your baby in the playpen too long, he will let you know. When he first gets tired of it, you can give him something new to play with. He may be content to remain there for a while longer.

Here are some playpen safety tips:

- ★ Make sure the mesh on the sides of the playpen has openings that are smaller than 1/4 inch.
- ★ Make sure there are no tears, holes or loose threads in the mesh.
- ★ Make sure the top rail cover has no tears or holes.
- ★ Playpens made of wood should have slats that are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart, or even closer.
- ★ Make sure screws and staples are firmly installed and that none are missing or loose.

When you set up your baby's playpen, make sure the sides of the playpen are locked in place. A partially set-up playpen can collapse on and harm your baby.



What's It Like To Be Five Months Old?

How I talk:

★ I like to watch other people make sounds. I try to make new sounds on my own.

I may say sounds like "ah-ah-ah," "ee-ee-ee" and "oo-oo-oo."

★ I may babble to get attention.

How I grow:

★ I can sit with support.

★ I explore my world with my eyes, fingers and mouth.

★ I reach for things when I see them and am able to grasp them.

★ When I'm lying down on my tummy, I can push myself up with my arms. At the same time, I can turn my head to look around.

When I'm lying on my back, I may touch my feet and may play with my toes.

★ If you hold me under my arms, I like to stand and move my body up and down.

What I understand:

★ I know my name when someone says it.

★ I can tell the difference between strangers and family.

★ I know familiar objects like my toys.

★ I am discovering parts of my body.

How I respond:

I like to watch other people's faces.

★ I like to smile and talk to myself when I'm looking in the mirror.

★ I smile and make noises when I see a person.

★ I may stop crying when someone talks to me calmly and softly.

★ I may cry when someone leaves or when someone takes an object away from me.

Your Baby's Sleep

A five-month-old baby may sleep for longer periods of time, like five to eight hours. But babies are individuals. Each baby has his own sleep patterns.

Babies are not always awake when they sound like they are. They can cry out and may make all kinds of noises in their sleep. Even if they wake up at night, babies may be awake for only a few minutes. They may fall asleep again on their own.

Don't get up right away if you hear your baby at night. It's best if your baby learns how to get back to sleep on his own. If your baby cries for several minutes, it's time to respond. He could be hungry, wet, cold or even sick.

When you get up to take care of him, do it as quietly and quickly as you can. Don't give him any extra stimulation. Don't talk or play with him. Don't even turn on the light. He needs to learn that night is for sleeping. Your baby doesn't care what time it is, as long as he gets what he needs.

Brain Development

The brain grows fastest in the first three years of life. That is why you see lots of changes in young children. Each child is unique. Each baby grows differently. There are things you can do for your baby that will help him learn. Here are some tips:

★ Talking to your baby helps him to learn how to speak. It's good to start talking to him long before he can speak. Talk to him while you are in the car and at other times, too. Talk to him when you take him for walks. Talk to him when you change his diaper. Talk to him when you feed him.

★ Babies learn things at different rates. They learn in different ways. Some babies learn quickly. Others take more time. If you are concerned, talk to your doctor. It's always good to encourage your baby when he tries to learn. Make a big deal of it when he tries to learn. This will help him. It will make him feel good.

★ Even at this young age, your baby will notice how you care for him. He will notice how you behave with others.

★ Many babies and young children have trouble with sudden change. Try to give your baby time to adjust to new places and new people.

Help Your Baby To Explore

Here are a few things that will help him explore himself and the world around him:

- ★ Hold your baby up in front of a mirror. Point out mommy and baby in the mirror.
- ☆ Hand your baby a toy, first to one hand and then to the other. He will soon learn to pass the toy from one hand to the other.
- ★ Bounce a large ball up and down. Soon your baby can follow the ball with his eyes.
- ★ Roll a ball toward a wall so that it hits and comes back. Your baby will learn to watch for the ball to come back.
- ★ Help your baby to stand up by holding him under his armpits. Babies will straighten their knees before they learn to relax them.
- ★ Sing songs when you are dressing or bathing your baby, or make up rhymes about his eyes, nose and mouth.

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Here are some things you can do with your baby to help him learn:

- ★ Get down on the floor with him and give him toys to play with. Sometimes, put the toy out of his reach so he will have to stretch for it. Other times, cover part of the toy with a blanket and see if he can find it. Be sure to make it fun so your baby doesn't get frustrated.

  Talk to him and repeat the sounds he makes. When he says "baa," you say "baa." He will smile and laugh and try to make the same sound again.
- ★ Read a book to him every day, even if it is the same book.
- ★ Dance to music with him in your arms.
- ★ Sing children's songs to him.
- ★ Take him for a walk in his stroller or in a cuddly pack when the weather is nice. Talk to him about what you see.
- ★ Sit with him in your lap and show him color pictures in magazines.
- ★ Show him toys of different colors.
- ★ When he gets tired of playing or trying to talk, cuddle him and hug him. Let him know you love him and care about him.
- ★ Babies love doing the same thing over and over and over again. This repetition is an excellent way for your baby to learn.

Stimulating Your Baby with Toys

At five months of age, your baby is likely to enjoy anything that he can push with his feet. He is also getting very good at reaching for objects and grabbing them. He is interested in exploring his body. He likes toys he can touch, suck on, look at and chew.

He likes to explore toys on his own, but he loves to explore them with you.

Your baby learns from playing. He likes to explore each toy just to get the feel of it. He likes to take a toy and twist it, shake it and suck on it. He likes to bang it against other objects.

Here are a few things that will help him explore himself and the world around him:

- ★ Give your baby a roly-poly toy that comes back up when it is knocked over.

  Put pictures in his crib or carriage. Make sure the pictures are out of his reach. Hang something bright on the wall of his bedroom.
- ★ Give him teething rings and plastic toys that are clean. Make sure his toys cannot be broken. Make sure they have no pieces that can come off.
- ★ The toys should all be made of safe materials, because your baby will put them into his mouth. Make sure they are too large for your baby to swallow or choke on them.
- ★ Give him a toy that is brightly colored like red or green.
- ★ Give him toys that make a noise like a squeaky stuffed animal, or give him a ball with bells inside.
- ★ Let him play with toys that make music. Make sure the toys are safe for him to play with or put in his mouth.

Sometimes babies are very happy playing with safe things that are not toys, like pots and pans.

Interacting and Playing

It is important to make time to play with your baby. How he understands the world comes from playing with other people. Two of his best playmates are his parents. Here are some tips for playing with your baby:

- ★ Sing nursery rhymes or songs to your baby.
- ★ Dance to music. Hold your baby firmly in your arms or in a baby carrier and dance to music you both like.
- ★ Hold your face close to your baby's. Copy his looks and his sounds. Laugh with your baby.
- ★ Your baby is interested in his hands and feet. Touch his fingers and toes while you talk to him or sing to him.

Dads and other caregivers should play with the baby, too. This is an exciting time for your five-month-old. He needs to get to know all the people who will take care of him besides his mom and dad.

Babies need to be around different types of people. This helps babies learn about themselves and the world. They need to learn to tell the difference between family members and strangers. There are many things brothers, sisters, grandparents and others can do to help your baby grow and learn.

Take Care of Your Back

With a baby in the house, you are doing a lot more lifting. You are bending and picking things up more often. This can put stress on your back and cause injury.

Think about taking care of your back. Having a strong back will help you take care of your baby and yourself.

Staying physically fit is a great way to take care of your back. Muscles in your stomach, legs, arms and back are used when you lift things. Strong muscles will help you avoid straining your back.

Ask your doctor what exercises are best for you. Even standing up straight and sitting up straight will help your back. With a little planning, you can learn to lift things without strain.

Here are some tips to help you prevent hurting your back:

- ★ When possible, don't bend over from your waist when you pick up your baby. Instead, lower yourself by bending your knees. Then use the muscles in your legs and buttocks to push yourself back up.
- ★ Lift your baby up slowly and smoothly. If you use jerky movements, you can strain your back.
- ★ Never twist your waist and bend at the same time.
- ★ Don't try to lift something heavy any higher than your shoulders. When you need to put something heavy up high, get some help. Use a step stool or a ladder.
- ☆ Hold heavy objects close to you. Don't reach out to pick up a heavy object. Carry your baby close to your body.

Information Resources for Families.

Families who are enrolled in the WIC program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) can get information on breastfeeding, formula feeding and nutrition at their local WIC office. Families eligible for WIC receive nutrition counseling and supplemental foods such as baby formula, milk and cereal. To find the WIC office nearest you, call your state health department or visit the WIC Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic/. Many public libraries offer free access to the Internet and provide help for first-time users.

For information about early childhood education initiatives, you may contact the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit the Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/teachingouryoungest/.

To learn about child care options, you may contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Aware by phone at 1-800-424-2246 or visit their Web site at www.childcareaware.org/.

For more information and resources on postpartum depression, breastfeeding and many other women's health issues call The National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) at 1-800-994-9662 (1-800-994-WOMAN). You can visit their Web site at www.4woman.org/.

To learn more about breastfeeding, you may call La Leche League at 1-800-LALECHE or visit their Web site at www.lalecheleague.org/.

To learn more about free or low-cost health insurance for children, you can call the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Insure Kids Now program at 1-877-KIDSNOW. You can also visit their Web site at www.insurekidsnow.gov/.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers' (AAPCC) poison control hotline, 1-800-222-1222, should be on your list of emergency numbers. To learn more, you can visit the AAPCC Web site at www.aapcc.org/.

Families who cannot afford a car safety seat can contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. They can provide information on resources that help low-income families purchase or borrow child car seats. You may call them at 1-800-424-9393 or visit their Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

To learn more about safety, you can call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or you can visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov/.

Coming Next Month

Grandparents and Other Adults

Let Your Baby Feed Herself

Eating New Foods

Falling Asleep on Her Own

. . . and much more!

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